JOHN'S FIRST WIFE.

BY

ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS

The air was crisp outside, but the roomy kitchen was warm and sunny. Mingled with the grateful heat was the odor of sprinkled linen, steaming under the iron. Linen hung on clothes-horses and on the backs of chairs, and still the wicker basket underneath the ironing board groaned with sheets, pillowslips, tablecloths and napkins neatly piled in soft damp rolls.

Ann Quigley stood at the board ironing. As she ironed she chatted with her neighbor, Susan Stephens, who had come in with her knitting from across the way.

"You don't mind my going right along with my work, do you?" she asked. Susan shook her head, her lips being occupied with counting inarticulate stitches. "Today's Tuesday, you know, and the ironing's got to be finished. It goes against grain to leave it over till Wednesday, for Wednesdays I bake. Besides, I can work and talk at the same time."

She straightened out a sheet, tested an iron with the tip of a wet finger and passed it across, back and forth, this way and that, sidewise.

"You are a good housekeeper, Ann," said Susan admiringly. "You are given up to be the best housekeeper in this town. John Quigley got a prize when he got you. Everybody says so."

Ann stopped short, resting her hot iron on the sheet so long that when she suddenly remembered and took it off there was the print of it in a fine light brown.

"See what you made me do!" she cried, and, snatching up the sheet, she took a shining pail from a shelf, filled it at the sink and soused the linen into the water. "Maybe it will come out," she muttered, "but I don't know. I'm afraid not."

"I am awfully sorry!" apologized Susan contritely.

"Never mind. I'll leave it to soak. I guess it will come out." She folded another sheet across the board. "It was my fault," she said. "You surprised me so. And they talk like that, do they? I'm a good housekeeper and John got a prize when he got me, eh?"

"That's what they say!" asserted Susan.

Ann ironed awhile in silence.

"And they say you're a splendid cook, too," added Susan, anxious to atone for the scorched sheet.

Ann smiled, well pleased. Then she sighed.

"It don't make much difference how good a housekeeper you are, Susan," she said reflectively, "or how good a cook. Things like that don't make a man care anything more for you. He kinder expects it of you. All the cooking in the world won't keep a man from thinking about somebody else if he's a mind to. It won't make him forget."

"What do you mean?" asked Susan. "You don't mean John?"

"Yes, John. Do you remember his first wife?"

"Umph, hum! But she wasn't a patching to you when it comes to housekeeping."

"Maybe not," mused Ann wistfully, "but there must have been something mighty lovable about her. She's been dead five years now this coming June, and John hasn't forgotten her yet. And what's more, I don't believe he ever will forget her."

She folded the sheet into squares, pressed it lovingly between her palms—it was so clean and white and smooth, and Ann's soul rejoiced in cleanliness and whiteness and smoothness—and laid it on a chair. Then, taking a towel from the basket, she shook out the fringe and spread it on the board.

"She was a pretty woman," she continued, briskly ironing the bright red border, "and beauty goes a long way with a man. Nobody would ever accuse me of being pretty," she added, with a constrained laugh, and Susan, looking up, was forced mentally to confess the truth of her remark. Her purple calico, starched and bristling with cleanliness, set off a fairly good figure, but aside from that little could be said in her favor.

"You've got pretty hair, Ann," she ventured encouragingly.

Ann sighed again. "Yes, I've got pretty hair," she acknowledged, "but hair don't count much when your face is plain."

Her face was plain. There was no gainsaying it. Its plainness was accentuated by the halo of reddish brown hair.

"Beauty ain't but skin deep," said Susan sententiously.

"Yes, but ugliness is to the bone," finished Ann.

There followed a period of energetic silence freighted with thought.

"John's first wife was pretty," repeated Ann by and by, "mighty pretty. She was young and fresh and bloomy, like a flower. She was one of them southern women what don't know any more about housekeeping than a fly, but they know how to make the men care for them, and that's half the battle. It's more than half. They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but it ain't. It's through his eyes.

"You know I lived next door to them. I could see into her kitchen. And of all the kitchens it was a sight! She hadn't any system about her work. She would put things away and spend half her time looking for them. And cook! She couldn't any more cook than she could fly to the moon. She would have her potatoes mashed and ready for the table, a-cooling off, and her chicken only half done. I don't believe she ever got everything done at once in her life. She couldn't cook, and she couldn't learn to cook. It wasn't in her."

She shrugged her shoulders, with a laugh.

"It's the greatest wonder," she went on, "that John didn't get chronic dyspepsia eating the things she set before him. But he didn't. He seemed to thrive. Whatever she cooked was good enough for him. He would come home early and help her, stewing over the stove, doing all kinds of woman's work, trying to make things easy for her. I've seen him run along the walk and up the steps—three steps at a time—he was so glad to get home, then work like a nigger when he got there."

She hung the towel on the back of a chair and shook out the fringe of another.

"He has never done a lick of work since we have been married," she said, her mouth twitching. "He has never had to help me in the kitchen or in the garden or even in the flower beds in the front yard, but he never comes hurrying home, he never runs up the steps three steps at a time, and he never smiles when he meets me at the door."

"Maybe he is worried about business," suggested Susan, measuring the thumb of the glove she was knitting by her own. "Men have lots of things to worry them that they don't tell their wives."

"No, it ain't that; it's remembering her. He can't forget her, and I can't make him forget her.

"Sometimes I wish I didn't live in the same house as they lived together. That makes it worse. There's the little front porch where they used to sit of evenings. When he and I sit there in the summer time and I see his eyes way off yonder, I know he's thinking of her."

She ironed slowly, staring through the window, her own eyes moist. "I know," she reiterated softly, "that he is thinking how he used to sit there with her, and he is wishing it was him and her again instead of him and me."

She took to ironing faster.

"I'll never forget the day she died," she continued. "She died three days after the baby was born. She never liked me somehow, but I didn't let that interfere with doing my neighborly duty by her. I went over and helped take care of her.

"The baby was born dead, but she grieved after it the same as if it had been a living child. She would lie there staring up at the ceiling and grieving until it was pitiful to see her. I believe it was that that killed her. She didn't want to live and it dead. One day she made me bring out its little clothes and lay them on the bed all around her. She fingered the sleeves, the tears rolling down her cheeks. 'There'll never be any little arms in them,' she said and turned her face to the wall.

"I put the things back in the drawer where she couldn't see them any more.

"That last day she was burning up with fever. Her little feet were hot as fire. So were her hands. She talked flighty about the baby, about how she wanted to see it and they wouldn't let her. How could they and it dead? I sat on the edge of the bed, stroking her poor hot feet, when suddenly they began to get cold, and she stopped talking.

"I sent for John in a hurry. When he came, he was like a madman. He knelt down by her bed and begged her to listen to him. 'Don't go away without telling me goodby, sweetheart!' he said, a-sobbing between the words. 'Don't leave me like this! Say goodby to me, sweetheart!'

"I put my hand on his shoulder. I wanted to tell him that she was past speaking, and past hearing for that matter, but he stared up at me as if he had never seen me before. 'Go away,' he said. 'Leave me alone with her, can't you? Go away!' And he gave me a push.

"I went out and shut the door."

She leaned her elbows on the board and looked hard at Susan, who had dropped her knitting in her lap.

"I think the only reason he married me," she said sadly, "was because I took good care of her. But sometimes I wish he hadn't. He'll never forget her, and I can't make him. I do everything I can to please him. I keep this place like wax from garret to cellar, but it might be helter skelter from one week's end to the other for all the notice he takes of it. I stand in this kitchen for hours cooking things to please him, and he hardly tastes them. He sits and stares across the table at me, and I know he doesn't see me. He sees her there opposite him in her old place that I have taken. The look in his eyes hurts me, Susan."

Susan heaved a sigh and again took up the glove. "Maybe you imagine it," she said.

Ann stood erect. She replaced the cold iron with a hot one.

"I wish I did," she said. "I only wish I did. I don't complain. You mustn't think that. He is kind to me. There couldn't be a kinder man, but kindness ain't all a woman wants. She wants a little love mixed up with it sometimes—just a little bit of love.

"Listen! Last night I was lying by his side wide awake and he asleep and dreaming. After awhile he threw his arm around my neck and kissed me in his sleep. 'Sweetheart,' he said, 'my sweetheart!' You'd have felt sorry for me then if you could have seen how still I lay, hardly daring to breathe for fear he would wake and find that it was me there by his side and not his 'sweetheart.'"

"Maybe he meant you," said Susan. "Don't he ever call you 'sweetheart?'"

"No, and he never called her anything else."

The basket was empty. Not a single towel, sheet, napkin or pillowslip remained to interfere with Ann's work on Wednesday—her baking day. She was ironing the last piece, a damask tablecloth, her best cloth, which she reserved for company. Traced upon it was a pattern of ivy leaves. Under the manipulation of her iron this pattern shone, raised into brilliancy by the heat and the pressure of her strong right hand.

A tear dropped. She quickly ironed it out and, passing her sleeve across her eyes, caught two other tears.

Then the slow, soft sweep of the iron over the steaming linen, back and forth, this way and that and sidewise, made rhythmical music in the silent room, while Susan's needles clicked in silent sympathy.

"HE'LL NEVER FORGET HER, AND I CAN'T MAKE HIM."

Fashions in Candy.

The confectionery trade is a trade of topsy turvydom. There is as much fashion in it as in the craft of evolving those creations of fallals, flowers and feathers whose ultimate destination is the adornment of ladies' heads. Time was when the hardpan goods were the one thing needful; these were ousted from public favor by the American invention of soft centered pan goods, jelly beans and so on. Jap nuggets had a reign, and a long one, and might fitly be styled the Victorian reign of this era, so far as candy is concerned. Hanky panky, slapjack and a thousand others of like kind had a brief popularity, to give way, in turn, to some other cunning form of candy weaving. It is to this ever changing fancy that the candy trade owes its vitality, and so long as there are inventive brains ready to devise new forms, so long will the trade be prosperous.—Exchange.

WADDLES' HOLIDAY.

WAS MARRED BY THE EXPENSE OF LIFE AT A HOTEL.

So Mrs. W. Decided to Better Things by Taking Meals at a Restaurant, With Results Not the Most Satisfactory in the World.

"Now, William, this here livin at expensive hotels is all foolishness. We can't afford it. We get more to eat than we need anyway."

"It's most supper time now," replied William Waddle meekly.

"Yes, an right now's a good time to begin bein sensible. We'll go over to that restaurant an have some nice tea an toast. Doctors say folks oughtn't to eat much before goin to bed. Tea an toast is light an healthy. If it wasn't for your wife, William Waddle, you'd get to be a reg'lar gormandizer, like that fat man as sits at our table an eats two meals while decent folks is only gettin ready to begin on one."

So the Waddle procession moved over to the restaurant and pre-empted two seats at the best table.

"Some tea an some toast," ordered Mrs. W.

"Yes'm. What else?" said the waitress.

"Nothin else. Tea an toast is enough supper for anybody. Folks do too much eatin nowadays."

In due time the toast appeared—two thin pieces for Mrs. Waddle, two thinner pieces for William Waddle. A chunk of butter kept guard between each two pieces and refused to soften in honor of the occasion. Likewise the tea arrived, nice and green, nice and cold, and with the cups only half filled.

"What next?" asked the girl, with a faraway look in her eyes.

"Nothin next!" snorted Mrs. W., with her eyes on the tea. She detests green tea. The girl went away.

"Pitch in, William. This here toast is good, an—an—dry," she added, failing to find any other point of excellence. "So's the tea. Have some sugar—an milk?"

Mr. W. had some accordingly, meanwhile eying the pickle jar and the catchup bottle hungrily.

The toast vanished. The tea disappeared like dew under the hot morning sun. Nothing remained but two unrepentant chunks of butter.

Mr. Waddle looked at Mrs. Waddle, but her eyes were on the bottom of the cup. He reached for the cracker jar and helped himself to that, too, seasoning up the crackers to a nicety and adding a pickle by way of an appetizer.

Still Mrs. Waddle made no remark. The girl with the faraway look in her eyes came back.

"Anything else?"

"Some more tea an toast, please," said Mrs. W. carelessly. William wondered, but said nothing. He knows a thing or two, does William.

"What's the bill?" asked Mrs. Waddle in a well fed, unconcerned tone of voice. "William, wipe that catchup off your whiskers." William did so promptly.

"Tea, 10 cents a cup, is 40 cents; toast, 10 cents a plate, is 40 cents; crackers, 10 cents—90 cents, please."

Mrs. Waddle paid, and Mr. Waddle pondered. As they passed out of the front door he noticed a sign reading thus: "Regular Supper, 35 cents." Then he did a little mental figuring and pondered some more. Mrs. Waddle said not a word, but led the way back to their hotel.

The porch was empty. The guests were inside, comfortably eating their fill in plain sight of the Waddles' camping place. The waiters inside passed the second course. An appetizing whiff of well cooked fish stole on to the porch and landed fairly upon Mrs. Waddle's nose. She is particularly fond of fish.

William picked his teeth cautiously, yet hopefully.

Mrs. Waddle rocked placidly back and forth in her porch chair. The Bay View train, just passing by, seemed to engross her entire attention.

William grew more hungry with every passing moment. His stomach felt empty and heavy and queer. But hope was not dead.

As the Bay View train faded out of sight Mrs. Waddle stopped rocking, sat up straight and calmly announced:

"William Waddle, it's supper time. There's our table, an there's our waiter. Do you mean to sit out here a-moonin all night?"—Detroit Journal.

Getting Matters Adjusted.

"You are half an hour late at our appointment, Mr. Tompkins."

"Yes; I stopped to get my luncheon."

"Well, be kind enough to sit down and wait while I go out and get mine."

It Went Into the Waste Barrel.

"Your meter in this poem limps a little," replied the editor.

"Ah!" replied the poet. "But please observe that it is about the wooden legged hero of the street cleaning gang."—Philadelphia North American.

No Bedclothes Trust.

"Those coal barons can't squeeze me."

"Don't you burn anthracite?"

"Yes, but when the price gets high I go to bed early."—Chicago Record.

WAS GOOD AT FIGURES.

How Mr. Otis Skinner Managed to Make Some Money.

"Otis Skinner, the actor, was standing in front of the Tulane theater," said an attache of the house, "when a somewhat seedy looking stranger rushed up and seized him by the hand.

"'My dear fellow! I'm delighted to see you!' he exclaimed in a hoarse voice, indicative of prolonged drought. 'I noticed in the papers you were coming, and I've been on the lookout for you ever since your bills were up.'

"'That's very good of you,' murmured Mr. Skinner, doing his best to simulate joy and recalling the man as a decidedly casual acquaintance of a preceding visit. 'I was a little preoccupied when you came up and'—

"'Oh, not a word!' interrupted the other heartily. 'It's all right, me boy! The fact is I can only stop for a moment and want you to do me a bit of a favor. I see a chance to make $2.50 tonight if I have $10. Can you oblige me with the amount until tomorrow morning? It will be $2.50 in my pocket and not a cent out of yours.'

"The actor pondered for a moment and then produced two silver dollars and a half.

"'I'll do better than that,' he said, handing over the coins. 'Now you've made $2.50, and I've made $7.50.'

"Mr. Skinner was born in Hartford, and when he was a boy he took first prize in arithmetic."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

True to Principle.

Constance, the beautiful maiden, struggles desperately in the water.

"Save me!" she shrieks.

Harold, the brave youth, standing upon the shore, throws aside his coat.

"Are you sinking for the third time?" he asks anxiously.

"Oh, dear! I forgot to count! How stupid of me!" cries Constance in much confusion.

Harold is as brave as a lion truly, but he will scarcely risk violating what is perhaps the most cherished convention of romance.—Detroit Journal.

At the Zoo.

Freddie—I wonder what that hyena sees to laugh at.

Maude—Why, don't you know that your necktie has crept around beneath your right ear.—Pittsburg Press.

Righteous Soul.

"You are bitter enough on trusts now," spoke up a man in the audience, "but I happen to know that you belonged to one for several years."

"I did, my fellow citizens!" thundered the orator. "But when I became fully awake to the enormity of the thing I did my best to crush that trust. I sold my factories to that trust, my fellow citizens, for twice what they were worth in cash!"—Chicago Tribune.

Perfectly Cool.

"I hope you are one of the people who can keep cool in the presence of danger."

"I am," answered the man who wanted a place as a private watchman.

"Have you ever demonstrated it?"

"I have. I once came near being drowned in a skating pond."—Washington Star.

Matrimonial Microbe's Origin.

Singleton—Do you agree with the doctor who considers kissing dangerous?

Benedict—Oh, yes.

Singleton—What dread effect do you think is likely to arise from it?

Benedict—Marriage.—New York Press.

Hands Wanted.

Lady—You ought to be ashamed to admit that you can't find anything to do when the papers say they want thousands of farmhands out west.

Sandy Pikes—Farm hands? Why, I ain't got farm hands, lady. I'ze got city hands.—Chicago News.

Topic of Discussion.

He—What did you discuss at the meeting of your literary club this afternoon, my dear?

She—The outrageous action of Miss Burgins in almost doubling her price for making a gown.—Chicago Times-Herald.

Clear Understanding at Start.

Newlywed (after the ceremony)—Do you really think I shall make a good mate, darling?

Mrs. Newlywed—Oh, you're all right. How do you like your captain?—Philadelphia Record.

Courageous, But Rash.

"Mrs. Padderly insulted our C club."

"In what way?"

"She suggested that this y take up the study of 'manners.'"—cago Record.

Caught Them.

"Here you are, gentlemen!" sang the enterprising fakir at the vege rians' picnic. "Filtered cider!"

And they crowded around him.—C cago Tribune.